

Books and the People Who Make Them

The Man That Can Never Be Bored!

By GEORGE GORDON.

G. K. CHESTERTON once pointed out that "there is no such thing on earth as an uninteresting subject," that the bore, by his starry enthusiasm, his solemn happiness, may be accounted in some sense poetical; that though we might weary of our task should we be forced to count the blades of grass or the leaves of the trees the bore would exult, seeing in them the swords of an army, . . . "for it is the gods who do not tire of the iteration of things, to them the nightfall is ever new and the last rose as red as the first."

When Mr. Chesterton announces that you cannot bore him I simply do not believe him. I know he is only talking, though to some purpose, for he has, when not too indolent, a splendid sense of rhythm and the gestures of a giant tossed down among the journalists of Fleet Street out of the yesterday of Rabelais; his words follow one another as naturally as sheep; they seem as sensible, as useful, and when decently herded as beautiful. But though a subject may not be in itself uninteresting, it becomes—with hollow, monotonous repetition—uninteresting to us.

Mr. Chesterton I must confess to be at worst no bore; at best a sort of demi-god, endlessly rebuilding the tumbled walls of Eden.

The essay in which Mr. Chesterton denies boredom concerns Mr. Rudyard Kipling, on whose lips and in whose eyes (as Charles Dudley Warner long ago pointed out) nothing on earth is commonplace and who therefore at times bores some of his readers; he is valiantly defended by Mr. Chesterton.

I say that Mr. Chesterton is sometimes indolent, often lazy. I have been told that when Fleet Street seems lonely and deserted, failing his presence, you may be sure he is buried deep in the country, hustled away from the distractions of London by his wife, keeper of his business conscience, to finish some book or other for which an outraged publisher is loudly clamoring . . . for "no clamor, no book" seems to be his maxim.

If the reader complains that these lines are no better than a soliloquy, I will merely say that Mr. Chesterton once pointed out that the only possible reason for a man's not talking to himself is that he is not worth talking to; a man, he said, has no business idiotically chasing his thoughts in a crazed circle like a puppy after its tail.

No man, indeed, as Mr. A. G. Gardiner says, was ever more careless of his reputation than Gilbert K. Chesterton. And yet what a reputation it is! A legend of fairy tales, brave deeds carelessly carried to brilliant achievement, high hopes, undaunted youth.

Mr. Chesterton will always amaze us with the freshness of his viewpoint.

The popularity of E. K. Means as a writer of negro stories is one of those things that you can't get around. In the number of the *All-Story Weekly* for September 21 there are fourteen letters from readers, and all mention Means and all mention him favorably. Since the *All-Story* began printing Means's yarns it is doubtful if a number has appeared that didn't contain at least one letter demanding more of his work.

LAST week the novel *Wild Apples* arrived. We had a little room, fortunately, on the shelf with *Wild Oranges* (in *Gold and Iron*) and *Grapes of Wrath*. The first, we think, was *The Wild Olive*—which was singularly tame, a stuffed pimento, in fact.

A. Elwood Corning, author of a *Life of Will Carleton*, the poet, will shortly publish a monograph on Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State under Grant. John Bassett Moore has written an introduction to the book.

For those who no longer enjoy Robin Hood the Macmillan Company is publishing *Our National Forests*, by Richard H. D. Boerker, a compendium of really useful information.

Believers in the Tagorical Imperative, the well known philosophical concept, may prepare themselves to buy in one volume *Gitanjali* and *Fruit Gathering*, illustrated by Indian artists.

All the authors who know Harold S. Latham—and a lot of authors do; dealing humanely with authors is his daily recreation—all, all of them will buy his boys' story, *Under Orders; The Story of Tim and the Club*, in order to point out the Flaws, if any. And all the Sons of Authors (there's an Order of 'em, you know) will resolute in the book's favor—and not entirely for the sake of disagreeing with their parents, either.

The poems in Amy Lowell's new book, *Can Grande's Castle*, are written in "polyphonic prose," and the four of them range from Bourbon Italy to the Battle of Trafalgar and from the Triumph of Titus to the Austrian air raids on Venice in the present war—England, Byzantium and Japan are backgrounds.

Bessie Beatty, author of *The Red Heart of Russia* (the Century Company), is a native of California and a relative of Admiral David Beatty, commander of the British Grand Fleet. The Beattys—these Beattys—are an Irish family. Miss Beatty has one brother in the American army and another in the British service in India.

Gene Stratton-Porter's first novel appeared in 1904. Since then she has written six novels and five nature books. The nature books are about three times as hard to write as the novels, take much more time and energy and bring in infinitely smaller royalties; but for years she alternated a novel and a nature book. Mrs. Porter does not put money making first, and her policy in writing is the best evidence of it. Prior to the publication of *A Daughter of the Land* over 6,500,000 copies of her books had been sold. The total represents a very large fortune, or several fortunes, in royalties; but more than once Mrs. Porter dissipated the thousands earned by a novel on nature work in preparation for a nature book.

Torrey Ford, son of Sewell Ford and author of *Cheer-up Letters From a Private With Pershing*, got the Croix de Guerre some time ago. To quote his father: "Beyond a copy of the official citation which Torrey forwarded he wrote very little about it, save that he was glad to get it to go with his second service stripe. But I gather from the document, which is in French, that the cross was awarded for some sort of gallantry during

actions of July 15 and 27. I suppose that he was too fussed for words after having been kissed by some whiskered French General."

The fourteenth (1918-1919) edition of the *Exporters' Encyclopaedia* has been published by the Exporters Encyclopaedia Company, 80 Broad street, New York. It has everything, from sixty-four maps and facsimiles of consular documents to monthly "correction notes" which keep it up to date.

The Princeton University Press will publish shortly *Professional Re-education of Maimed Soldiers*, by Leon de Paeuw. The book, a report of Belgium's work in human reconstruction, is translated by the Baronne Moneheur, and has an introduction by Mme. Henry Carton de Wiart. Part of the proceeds from its sale will go to a Belgian charity.

"The first duty of a human being in this world is to take himself off other people's backs," opines Dr. Frank Crane in 21. "I would not wait for an Ideal Job. The only ideal job I ever heard of was one some other fellow had." He must mean ours.

German propaganda launched in Denmark against Hugh Gibson, formerly secretary of the American legation at Brussels and author of *A Journal From Our*

Legation in Belgium, has just come to American attention. The *Politiken* of June 10, 1918, printed a story of German accusations of British espionage by Mr. Gibson. The story was cleverly placed, but so stupidly written as to defeat its purpose, the whole performance being in this respect very typically German.

Scout Joe Cassells, author of *The Black Watch*, was held up in the slacker roundup in New York city, and thereupon the arresting young man began to see things as follows: Draft classification card showing Class 5, Letter F; certificate of honorable discharge from the British army for physical disability from wounds received at the Marne in 1914; British regimental insignia; documents showing that the bearer was lecturing for the United States Shipping Board. . . . The young man insisted he could not wait to see any more. . . . And he seemed not to have much to show himself.

A sergeant went into a camp library maintained by the American Library Association and asked for a late book on shipbuilding. The association takes great pains that all books of a technical nature which might be useful to soldiers and sailors are kept on the shelves. So the librarian in charge reached confidently for a brand new book on shipbuilding and handed it to the sergeant.

"Shucks," grunted the sergeant; "I did the drawings for that book!"

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